



For Immediate Release:
June 14, 2022

Media Contact:

[Lisa Cox, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services](#)

Heat and humidity can be a dangerous combination

In 2021, 18 Missourians died due to heat-related illnesses

(JEFFERSON CITY, MO) – The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) urges Missourians of all ages to take precautions as heat and humidity rise to dangerous levels.

Heat-related illnesses often affect the very young, the elderly and the chronically ill, but summer temperatures can also take a toll on healthy young and middle-aged adults.

In 2021, 18 people died from heat exposure in Missouri, ranging in age from 35-105 years. Half of the deaths occurred among those between the ages of 35-64.

During prolonged periods of high temperatures, using air conditioning – either at home or by seeking shelter in a [local cooling center](#) -- is the best preventive measure.

“Heat and humidity can place a lot of stress on the body,” said DHSS Acting Director Paula Nickelson. “Heat exhaustion can come on suddenly, with little warning, and lead to heatstroke which becomes a very dangerous situation.”



During excessive heat, Nickelson urges Missourians to check on friends and neighbors, especially those who are elderly and chronically ill. To report a senior citizen or an adult with disabilities who is in need of assistance due to the heat, call the state's toll-free abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-392-0210, or [make a report online](#).

Medications can impair a body's response to heat, making them more vulnerable to the heat.

There are a number of steps individuals can take to stay cool including:

- **Wear appropriate clothing**—wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.

- **Stay cool indoors**—stay in air-conditioned places as much as possible. Find a local [cooling center](#).
- **Stay hydrated**—drink plenty of fluids regardless of your activity level, and do not wait to until you are thirsty. Avoid sugary and alcoholic beverages; these actually cause you to lose body fluids.
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully**—try to plan outdoor activity for morning or evening hours when the temperature is coolest.
- **Pace yourself**—reduce exercise or physical activity during the hottest part of the day, and take frequent breaks in the shade or in an air-conditioned place.
- **Wear sunscreen**—sunburn affects your body’s ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated.
- **Prepare your home**—change air conditioner filters, cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes or shades, and make sure you have portable fans if necessary.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of heat related illness and how treat them is also important. Signs of heat exhaustion may include muscle cramps; heavy sweating; cold, pale and clammy skin; dizziness; headache; nausea or vomiting; and fainting or passing out. If you think you or a loved one are experiencing heat exhaustion, you should stop physical activity move to a cool place—preferably air-conditioned, loosen clothing, and sip cool water. Seek medical attention immediately if you are throwing up, your symptoms get worse or symptoms last longer than one hour.

Signs of heat stroke may include high body temperature (103°F or higher); hot, red, dry or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; or loss of consciousness. If you think you or a loved one are experiencing heat stroke you should call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Move the person to a cool place—preferably air-conditioned. Help lower the person’s body temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath until medical personnel arrive. Do not give the person anything to drink.

For more information regarding heat-related illness and prevention, visit the websites of [DHSS](#) or the [CDC](#).

###

About the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services: The department seeks to be the leader in protecting health and keeping people safe. More information about DHSS can be found at health.mo.gov or find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) @HealthyLivingMo.